

Down County Recreation Advisory Board

MINUTES – October 6, 2009

APPROVED

Location: Potomac Community Center

Members Present

Linda Berg-Cross
Bob Gans
Fritz Hirst
John Pechilis
Jerilyn Ray-Shelley
Michael Sandner
Joy Shindler-Rafey

Staff Present

Joy Peters, MCRD
Natalie Vetter, MCRD

Guests

Mary Bradford, MNCPPC

Welcome

The meeting began at 7:05 pm, and Fritz Hirst encouraged members to recruit prospective candidates since there is now one member opening as well as openings for two alternates.

Minutes

The minutes from the September meeting were approved as read.

Park Updates

On a sad note, Bill Gillette passed away after many years of service. Our guest Mary Bradford, director of Parks, stated that there will be an upcoming memorial to his strong dedication and years of service. She encouraged the Board to express their remembrances in the form of a letter to be inserted into a book of memories for the family.

Mary Bradford continued with a full update on the Parks/Recreation report. She stated that she and Gabe are in frequent contact on many issues regarding both organizations. She also stated the differences between the two organizations including that M-NCPPC reports directly to the County Council and has more flexibility in its ability to apply for and receive funds from outside sources.

She noted that the study has shown that it is difficult to consider merging the two infrastructures. However, four areas were found for improvements and efficiencies:

- Technology – create one portal in order to improve service to the customer
- Marketing – enhance support of events and collaboration with both Parks and Recreation
- Programming – develop a Joint Programming Alliance to avoid conflicts and improve coordination
- Facilities – long term goal of moving some facilities to the more appropriate agency.

She stated that the most controversial aspect of the study is that there is no funding to accomplish some of the improvements and enhancements that could bring greater efficiency for customers. Jerilyn Ray-Shelley commented that her report clarified many issues and made good sense.

Following the report, a question was asked about the Westmoreland facility. Mary's response was to explain the study that Parks has made of its World War II vintage buildings to determine which are low use/high maintenance buildings. The Westmoreland building is one of those buildings, and yet the community views it as part of its cultural landscape. No decision has been made as yet, but there is some consideration regarding transferring it to the community or to an interested nonprofit organization.

Mary also shared information on the Sligo Golf Course. A special appropriation has been given by the County Council to operate the golf course until June 30. A 17-person task force has also been appointed to look into options for making the golf course self-sufficient. More discussions will occur in January, and a final decision is still pending.

Discussion also occurred around the new Recreation site in Potomac off of Travilah Road. This small parcel of land that has been acquired by the Recreation Department for a community center has since been determined to be fifty per cent wetlands. Parks has researched the adjacent park lands and determined that a land swap is not feasible because it is premium woodlands. Fritz suggested that the Board follow this issue as it serves this region. In lieu of Jeff Devlin attending tonight's meeting his written report was distributed to the members.

Recreation Department Update

Joy Peters reported that the Wisconsin Place Community Center opened September 28 with a grand opening tentatively scheduled for mid-November. She distributed a brochure of the new center, and stated that center staff has been busy setting up memberships and giving tours. She mentioned that the center is offering a corporate weight room membership for the neighboring businesses.

Report from the Countywide Recreation Advisory Board

Jerilyn Ray-Shelley stated that Dave Magill withdrew his name from the Countywide Board's elections, and Donna Bartko was re-elected as the new chairperson. This year Donna Bartko would like the region Boards to be more aware of diversifying their members, and she is hopeful of finding new and better ways to involve the Boards and get their involvement on issues. Fritz agreed that this Board also wants to achieve increased visibility and leverage and supports this concept.

Donna Bartko announced that all region Board members are invited to attend a meeting on January 4 to learn more about artificial turf. More information will be forthcoming.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 3 at the new Wisconsin Place Community Center. John Pechilis will send information to Board members regarding parking in the Geico parking lot.